



Report Information from ProQuest

December 21 2013 21:24

Table of contents

1. Troubling beginnings: Trans(per)forming African American history and identity.....	1
---	---

Troubling beginnings: Trans(per)forming African American history and identity

Author: Stevens, Maurice E

Publication info: University of California, Santa Cruz, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2000. 9996961.

[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract: This Dissertation, entitled *Troubling Beginnings: Trans (per)forming African American History and Identity* explores historiography, faith, and psychic development in contemporary African-American cultural productions and activities. It asserts that because African-American narratives of self and community develop in a social context that has traditionally dehumanized, dehistoricized, and devalued "blackness" that they have predominantly functioned in the service of cultural vindication to both positive and negative effect. It explores those effects and suggests more productive modes of "making history."

The dissertation examines contemporary reconstructed African-American histories, and demonstrates how films like *Sankofa*, *Panther*, and *Malcolm X* function as collective social memories and mediations of historical trauma that work to define and restrict the boundaries of "blackness." It argues that representations of mixed-race bodies, black "manhood" and "womanhood," and African-American authenticity limit African-American identity formation by defining cultural "authenticity." The dissertation also examines less closed modes of representational performance. Focusing on the liberative historical representation of James Cone and Ibn Al-'Arabi, Marlon Riggs' film *Black is...Black Ain't*, Anna Devere-Smith's performance work, and creative approaches to critical pedagogy, it posits "trans(per)formative acts" as modes of representing African-American pasts, presents, and futures that actually expand notions of "blackness" and black agency.

While developing a discussion of memory in relation to identity from a Freudian perspective, the dissertation uses Frantz Fanon's articulation of psychoanalysis as it might be applied in a colonial setting. Placing critical race theory in conversation with psychoanalysis and departing from Fanon, it complements critical psychoanalytic discussions of memory and trauma with insights from critical race theory, while also looking to Black Liberation Theology and one form of Islamic mysticism for insightful approaches to historical retranslation.

Examining Haile Gerima's *Sankofa*, Mario VanPeebles' *Panther*, and Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*, this dissertation identifies and analyzes how the three repeated images mentioned above function. The dissertation then considers alternative modes of representing African-American histories. It explores the liberative religious projects of James Cone and Ibn Al-'Arabi, Marlon Riggs' film *Black Is...Black Ain't*, and Anna Devere-Smith's performance work, and posits that "trans(per)formative acts" create possibilities for new modes of self imagining that both reject restrictive visions of "blackness," and condition the possibility for less exclusive, more flexible, and ultimately more productive concepts of self and social agency.

Subject: American studies; African Americans; Motion Pictures; Theater; Black history;

Classification: 0323: American studies; 0325: African Americans; 0900: Motion Pictures; 0465: Theater; 0328: Black history

Identifier / keyword: Communication and the arts, Social sciences, Identity, African-American, Cultural productions, Film, Performance art

Pages: 266 p.

Number of pages: 266

Publication year: 2000

Degree date: 2000

School code: 0036

Source: DAI-A 61/11, p. 4436, May 2001

Place of publication: Ann Arbor

Country of publication: United States

ISBN: 9780493041032, 0493041036

Advisor: Clifford, James

University/institution: University of California, Santa Cruz

University location: United States -- California

Degree: Ph.D.

Source type: Dissertations & Theses

Language: English

Document type: Dissertation/Thesis

Dissertation/thesis number: 9996961

ProQuest document ID: 304588451

Document URL: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304588451?accountid=35796>

Copyright: Copyright UMI - Dissertations Publishing 2000

Database: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text: The Humanities and Social Sciences Collection

Contact ProQuest

Copyright © 2013 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved. - [Terms and Conditions](#)